

UK Fishing Ports and Brexit

Background

The British Ports Association represents a wide range of ports in terms of size, location, and business focus, including 45 of the top 50 fishing ports by landings.

Our Fishing Ports Group meets twice a year to share experiences and discuss topical issues. In preparing this short paper the BPA has drawn on those discussions and also surveyed its members during March 2017. We asked about concerns, hopes and expectations for upcoming negotiations for the UK's withdrawal from the EU and a future fisheries regime.

The ports that responded to the survey landed over £200m and 2.1m tonnes of whitefish and shellfish in 2016.

Fishing rights were a prominent part of the 'Leave' campaigns, and we expect the UK Government to be a strong voice for the industry in Brexit negotiations in defence of the sector. The BPA Fishing Ports Group is keen to assist or provide advice or feedback to officials throughout this process, if needed.

Priorities for the future of fisheries post-Brexit

Funding for fisheries and infrastructure to continue post-2020

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and its precursors have been critical to supporting the maintenance and modernisation of infrastructure. Our members have overwhelmingly indicated the importance support for a similar scheme to continue, post Brexit. 90% said it was important, with 80% saying it was extremely important.

The UK's allocation of EMFF funding between 2014 and 2020 is €243m – approximately €34m per year. That is a relatively modest sum for Government and is vital to the UK's fishing ports and the wider sector.

Ideally, there should be consistency across the UK to ensure that the criteria are uniform and does not benefit one region above others. Assurances on the future of such a scheme could be made outside of the Brexit process by the UK Government and would be welcomed by industry.

Summary

It is absolutely essential that there be a funding scheme for infrastructure similar to the EMFF

There must be tariff-free, "frictionless" access to EU markets, post-Brexit

The UK Government must not use UK fisheries as a bargaining chip in talks

The UK needs to take control over the management of its own fisheries post-Brexit

Members responding to our survey landed over **£200m** worth and **2.1m** tonnes of whitefish and shellfish in 2016.

Fair access to waters and markets

Our members would like to see a fair system for all fishermen. There is a great deal of concern that the Government may use UK fisheries as a bargaining chip to gain concessions in other areas of negotiations. During negotiations, we would expect Ministers and officials to have particular regard for the prominence of fishing rights and sovereignty in the EU referendum campaigns and the importance of the industry to the coastal communities where they are located.

Our members see Brexit as an opportunity for the UK government to exert more control over our own waters. It is vital that when the UK leaves the EU, it does so with more control over the management of its own fisheries. Whilst some would like to see some level of control of EU and non-UK vessels fishing UK waters, others are dependent on them for business. All are agreed, however, that tariff-free access to EU markets is essential and of utmost importance. Given the level of imports and exports between the EU and the UK, we are confident that a pragmatic solution can be found.

Norway and Iceland both manage their own fisheries, have healthy fish stocks and trade with the EU. We would like to see a similar arrangement for the UK.

Fisheries Management

The industry agrees that effort restriction is the only successful way to manage a fishery. The UK should have control over the management of its fisheries post-Brexit and this would be an opportunity to work with industry to revisit areas that have been problematic, particularly for smaller vessels, such as the implementation of the landing obligation.

Our members would also like to see an uplift in the UK quota. In many ports this is vital to ensure that fishermen remain viable and regional jobs and business depend on this.

Better management of our fisheries demands better understanding of them. It is important that Government invests in fisheries science and innovation research so that new and more effective gear and infrastructure can be developed.

Our members would generally like to see fisheries managed centrally by the UK government post-Brexit, rather than the devolved administrations to avoid divergence in rules and regulations. Vessels can move from one jurisdiction to another, but ports obviously cannot and are therefore more reliant on there being a level legislative and regulatory playing field across the UK. We recognise that it is likely, however, that this would be a devolved issue and would urge the UK government and devolved administrations to work collaboratively, pre and post Brexit.

Contact

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British Ports Association Fishing Ports members

Our fishing ports members between them, cover in excess of 200 ports, harbours and piers

- Aberdeenshire Council
- Angus Council
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Associated British Ports
- Blyth Harbour Commission
- Bridlington Harbour Commissioners
- Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd
- Coleraine Harbour Commissioners
- Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles)
- Cornwall Council
- Dumfries & Galloway Council
- Environment Agency
- Eyemouth Harbour trust
- Fraserburgh Harbour Commissioners
- Grimsby Fish Market
- Highland Council
- Isle of Man Harbours
- Lerwick Port Authority
- Mallaig Harbour Authority
- Maryport Harbour Authority
- Milford Haven Port Authority
- Moray Council
- Newhaven Port & Properties Ltd
- Newlyn Pier & Harbour Commissioners
- Orkney Islands Council
- Peterhead Port Authority
- Plymouth Sutton Harbour Company
- Poole Harbour Commissioners
- Port of Sunderland
- Portland Harbour Authority Ltd
- Ports of Jersey
- Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners
- Scarborough Borough Council
- Scrabster Harbour Trust
- Shetland Islands Council
- Shoreham Port Authority
- St Margaret's Hope Pier Trustees
- Tarbert (Loch Fyne) Harbour Authority
- Torbay Council
- Ullapool Harbour Trustees
- Wells Harbour Commissioners
- Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners
- Wick Harbour Trust